

Initial teacher training in Brazil, Portugal, and Europe (2014-2024): the advance of privatisation under the pretext of teacher shortages

*Formação inicial de professores no Brasil, em Portugal e na Europa (2014-2024):
o avanço da privatização a pretexto da escassez de docentes*

*Formación inicial del profesorado en Brasil, Portugal y Europa (2014-2024):
el avance de la privatización con el pretexto de la escasez de docentes*

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Abstract: The changes brought about by neoliberalism aim to privatize the public sector and, specifically, public education. In this paper, we analyse initial teacher training policies in Brazil, Portugal, and Europe, considering the main legal milestones of the last two decades, including the so-called Bologna Process. We argue that these policies are part of a global agenda driven by supranational organisations such as the OECD and the European Union, including philanthropic organisations and global networks such as Teach For All; that we are witnessing a rush to privatise, taking advantage of the growing blurring of boundaries between the public and private sectors; and that the emerging problem of teacher shortages is being used as a pretext for the expansion and consolidation of that network and its accelerated training programme, which began in the 1980s/90s and is now presented as a ‘Leadership Development Programme’.

Keywords: Neoliberalism; Global public policies; Privatisation; Teacher training; Teacher For All.

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Resumo: As mudanças induzidas pelo neoliberalismo têm na mira a privatização do setor público e, especificamente, da educação pública. Neste trabalho analisamos, em particular, as políticas de formação inicial de professores no Brasil, em Portugal e na Europa, considerando-se os principais marcos legais das duas últimas décadas, abrangendo o denominado Processo de Bolonha. Defendemos que elas se inscrevem numa agenda global conduzida por organizações supranacionais como a OCDE e a União Europeia, incluindo filantrópicas e redes globais, como a Teach For All; que estamos a assistir a um apressuramento da agenda de privatização, aproveitando a crescente indeterminação de fronteiras entre os setores público e privado; e que o problema emergente da escassez de professores está a ser utilizado como pretexto para a expansão e consolidação daquela rede e do seu programa de formação acelerada iniciado nos anos 1980/90 e apresentado hoje como “Programa de Desenvolvimento de Liderança”.

Palavras-chave: Neoliberalismo; Políticas públicas globais; Privatização; Formação de Professores; Teacher For All.

Resumen: Los cambios inducidos por el neoliberalismo tienen como objetivo la privatización del sector público y, específicamente, de la educación pública. En este trabajo analizamos las políticas de formación inicial de los profesores en Brasil, Portugal y Europa, teniendo en cuenta los principales marcos legales de las dos últimas décadas, incluyendo el denominado Proceso de Bolonia. Defendemos que estas políticas se inscriben en una agenda global impulsada por organizaciones supranacionales como la OCDE y la Unión Europea, incluyendo organizaciones filantrópicas y redes globales como Teach For All; estamos observando una aceleración de la agenda de privatización, aprovechando la creciente indeterminación de las fronteras entre los sectores público y privado; y que el problema emergente de la escasez de profesores se está utilizando como pretexto para la expansión y consolidación de esta red y de su programa de formación acelerada, iniciado en los años 1980/90 y presentado hoy como «Programa de Desarrollo del Liderazgo».

Palabras clave: Neoliberalismo; Políticas públicas globales; Privatización; Formación docente; Teacher For All.

Received on: 02 de january de 2025

Accepted on: 28 de march de 2025

Introduction

As we finish writing this article, events are taking place that shamelessly show how the global agenda for privatizing education is intensifying, including initial teacher training among its main aspects. This neoliberal agenda has been taking hold since the 1980s, first in countries like the UK and the US, and progressively on a global scale, explicitly and aggressively, causing the "erosion of public education as a democratisation project" (Säfström, 2022, p. 349). As one of the main pillars of public education, teachers and teacher training have been under attack (Saltman, 2007; Sleeter, 2008; Giroux, 2010; Freitas, 2012; Gilbert, 2019) through strategies to shorten the duration and impose an instrumental, technical, and empiricist curriculum. Here are two examples of the advances of educational neoliberalism, led by international organisations such as the

OECD, the World Bank, the European Union and UNESCO, including philanthropies and global networks such as Teach For All (Zeichner, Peña-Sandoval, 2015; Saura, 2016; Williamson, 2018; Kurz, Do Amaral, 2023).

The first refers to events caused by Donald Trump (USA), namely the executive order signed in March 2025 to dismantle the Department of Education (The Wall Street Journal, 20 March 2025). This agency was created in 1979 to oversee the financing of public schools, administer student loans, and manage aid programmes for low-income students. Its extinction is part of the "spending cut" strategy defined by Trump and his allies, especially Elon Musk. The order instructs the newly confirmed Secretary of Education, Linda McMahon, former CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), to take "all necessary steps to facilitate the termination of the Department of Education". The arguments go beyond cutting spending, as they are based on the accusation that this agency is "indoctrinating young people with inappropriate racial, sexual and political material". The executive order stipulates that those programmes or activities receiving funds from the department must not develop "diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives or gender ideology". However, since the closure of an agency at ministerial level cannot be carried out without congressional legislation - a bill needs 60 votes and the Republican majority in the Senate is insufficient (53-47) - Trump circumvents this obligation not by formally abolishing it, but by transferring functions to other agencies and making drastic cuts to programmes and staff. Meanwhile, the Secretary of Education has already confirmed the sacking of around 1,300 people (around half of the workforce) as the first step towards the total closure of the Ministry.

The second example, seemingly disparate but also converging with the neoliberal agenda for education, is the growing spread of the global Teach For All (TFAll) network, which began in the 1980s under the name Teach For America. It was a programme of accelerated training for young graduates from various academic backgrounds, as a response to the problem of teacher shortages. In 1989, Wendy Kopp designed an ultra-rapid training programme (5 to 7 weeks) for young graduates from various academic backgrounds to teach in urban schools located in vulnerable contexts. From 1990, its inaugural year, the programme attracted "elite" graduates and public and private funding from major philanthropic foundations, governments, and multilateral organisations. According to the figures published on the TFAll website, its expansion has been such that "13,000 young people teaching more than 1 million children in classrooms across the global network". Massive funding is the main foundation of this significant and rapid expansion: 500 graduates recruited in the first year; 3,600 selected in 2008, out of 25,000

applicants, with a budget of over 122 million dollars at the time; and 4,100 selected in 2015, out of 40,000 young people who applied, with a budget of over 300 million dollars this year (Teach For All website, <https://teachforall.org/>)

The two examples illustrate the direction of the changes underway, enshrined in a "Globally Structured Agenda for Education". (Dale, 2004). Although the problem of teacher shortages is considered a kind of natural disaster, it is the result of political action-or inaction, which has the same strategic meaning-to further reduce public investment in education. As we will see below, TFAI, like its affiliated organisations in around 60 countries, is financially supported by large companies and philanthropic entities, public authorities and political actors, personalities and institutions from the academic world.

1. Teacher training in Brazil and Europe: teacher shortages as a pretext for accelerating the neoliberal agenda

In this section, we analyse the changes underway in policies related to initial teacher training Brazil, Portugal and Europe, considering the main legal frameworks that span the last ten years, also referencing previous documents to contextualise the period under analysis diachronically, namely, in the case of Brazil, the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB) No. 9394/1996 (Brazil, 1996) and, about Portugal, the so-called Bologna Process, to which Decree-Law No. 43/2007 is associated (Portugal, 2007). Specifically, in the last ten years, Resolution 02 of 2015, Resolution 02 of 2019, Resolution 04 of 2024 (Brazil, 2015, 2019, 2024), and Decree-Laws 79/2014 and 9-A/2025 (Portugal, 2014, 2025) stand out.

1.1 An overview of teacher training in Brazil

The expansion of the private sector's role in teacher training in Brazil has intensified, manifested both in the expansion of initial training courses offered by private institutions and in the acquisition of places financed by government programmes such as the Student Financing Fund (Fies) and the University for All Programme (Prouni). Fies, in turn, is a federal government initiative that finances students' undergraduate studies in classroom courses, while Prouni grants scholarships at private higher education institutions. Both are mechanisms for directly transferring public funds to the private education sector and help increase enrollment in private institutions. Currently, according to data from the Higher

Education Census 2023, the majority of training in degree programmes takes place in private higher education institutions.

Of the more than 1.7 million enrolments in undergraduate courses, 67.1 per cent (1,148,576) were registered in private institutions and 32.9 per cent (562,407) in public ones. Enrolment in face-to-face degrees accounted for 80.3 per cent in the public sector. When analysing the private network alone, 90% of enrolments were in distance learning courses. Regarding degree courses, 70.2 per cent of enrolments on the public network were on face-to-face courses. In contrast, 93.5 per cent of students in the private network enrolled in distance learning courses (Inep, 2023).

This data shows that places in public institutions currently account for less than a third of teacher training in Brazil. In the remaining two-thirds, which are the private sector's responsibility, 90 per cent of enrolments are in the Distance Education (DE) modality. This scenario highlights the commercialisation of teacher training, as the predominant conception has primarily been conducted by the private sector, with a significant emphasis on distance learning. In addition to this direct process and other privatisation mechanisms, there is a significant presence of representatives of private interests in the dispute over the formulation of the legal regulations that guide teacher training in the country. This influence is particularly evident in the clashes over the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Initial Training of Basic Education Teachers, especially over the last decade, when three versions of these guidelines were published (Brazil, 2015, 2019, 2024). As analysed in this text, although they all establish the standard requirement for general training with a minimum workload of 3,200 hours, as shown in Chart 1, they assume substantially different conceptions of teacher training.

Chart 1 - Curriculum structure standardised by Resolutions 02/2015, 02/2019, and 04/2024

STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM			
	Resolution 02/2015	Resolution 02 2019	Resolution 04/2024
Total workload	3.200h	3.200h	3.200h
Organisation of general and specific training	2,200 hours for core I of general education studies, specific and interdisciplinary areas, the field of education, its foundations and methodologies, and the various educational realities, and II of integrative studies for curricular enrichment.	Group I 800h: on an everyday basis, comprising scientific, educational, and pedagogical knowledge underpinning education and its links with systems, schools, and educational practices. II - Group II: 1,600 hours, for learning the specific contents of the areas, components, thematic units, and objects of knowledge of the BNCC, and for pedagogical mastery of these contents.	Core I 880h: General Education Studies comprising the scientific, educational, and pedagogical knowledge that underpins the understanding of the educational phenomenon and school education and forms the everyday basis for all undergraduate programmes. Nucleus II 1,600h: Specific content of the areas of professional activity, made up of the specific content of the areas, components, thematic units, and objects of knowledge defined in the national curriculum guidance document for Basic Education, and the knowledge necessary for the pedagogical mastery of this content.
Academic extension activities			320h
Practice	400h - practice as a curricular componente	400h - practice of curricular components	
Supervised internship	400h	400h	400h
In-depth theoretical and practical activities	200h		

Source: Resolution 02/2015; 02/2019 and 04/2024.

Driven by the guidelines established in Strategy 15.4 of Goal 15 of the National Education Plan (PNE) (Brazil, 2014-2024), a movement began in the country to build new guidelines for basic education teacher training. This movement was marked by a broad participatory process, culminating in 2015 in the promulgation of CNE/CP Resolution 2/2015, which defines the National Curriculum Guidelines for initial training at higher education level (degree courses, pedagogical training courses for graduates and second-degree courses) and for continuing training. This was considered the most complete legislation with the most significant approval among educational associations (Anfope, Anpae, Anped⁵, among others). Richter and Borges (2019) argue that this

⁵ Anfope: National Association for the Training of Education Professionals. ANPAE: National Association for Policy and Administration in Education. ANPED: National Association for Postgraduate Studies and Research in Education.

Resolution supports the idea that all teacher training courses in the country should have solid theoretical-practical and interdisciplinary training, which should dialogue and interact with basic education institutions, in line with the specificities of the region where the school is located, addressing socio-cultural issues as principles of equity. About the curricular organisation of teacher training courses, as shown in Table 1, this Resolution defines their duration as having at least 3,200 hours of practical academic work over at least 8 (eight) semesters or 4 (four) years. For Coimbra (2020), this legal document can be considered "resistance", in that it reaffirms the profile of teacher training in Brazil that was implemented in 2002 and incorporates the amphocean demands in the debate on teacher training in Brazil, regarding the expansion of the total course workload; the establishment of the relationship between initial and continuing training; the articulation, in a more organic way between theory and practice; and also the valorisation of the teaching professional. Resolution 2, 2015 thus reveals "a conception of training that sees teachers as subjects in the training process, considering the relevance of the unity between theory and practice, critical reflection on practice, praxis and dialogue for training" (Porto; Lima, 2016, p. 193).

However, CNE/CP Resolution No. 2/2015 (Brazil, 2015) came under intense attack and, based on new legal provisions, an orchestrated process was unleashed, culminating in its revocation. As part of this process, which took place during the Michel Temer government (2016-2019), CNE/CP Resolution No. 2 was approved on 22 December 2017, establishing and guiding the implementation of the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), which must be observed throughout the stages and modalities of Basic Education. However, this document only covers the first two stages of basic education - Early Childhood Education and Primary Education. The High School stage, in turn, was later regulated by CNE/CP Resolution No. 4 of 17 December 2018.

Since the approval of the BNCC, which guides the planning, development and implementation of the curriculum, there has been much criticism of this document because, according to a large body of literature, it has an eminently technical nature, with standardised objectives, targets and assessment procedures, with the intention of training quickly to meet the needs of the labour market. Shortly after its publication, there was intense criticism of its assumptions, contents, and intentions, in particular from Dourado and Oliveira (2018), who forcefully highlight six neoliberal characteristics of the BNCC:

- a) an emphasis on regulation and control by the education system over the work of teachers and schools, paradoxically contributing to secondaryising and/or disqualifying teaching work and making teachers responsible for student performance;
- b) a restricted and content-based understanding of the National Curriculum Base, seen as a single national curriculum with a list of minimum prescriptive contents (competences and skills);
- c) a close link between the curriculum and large-scale assessment, with the centrality of the results obtained by students in the national Portuguese and Maths tests, rather than the training processes;
- d) a technicist curricular approach, centred on learning objectives and the measurement of competency-based learning;
- e) lack of articulation with the other forms of national education that make up Basic Education, such as EJA and Professional and Technological Education;
- f) lack of articulation regarding the conception and guidelines of Basic Education, to build an education that forms human beings, citizens, capable of influencing the political and economic direction of the country, capable of creating new knowledge, of creating new directions for our common future (Dourado; Oliveira, 2018, p. 41. Our emphasis).

Similarly, Santos and Orso (2020, p. 169) state that "[...] the attempt to create a homogenising curricular policy in the country, empty of content and poor in knowledge, at the whim of the elites, eager to keep workers alienated, a condition for perpetuating their privileges, has become evident". The BNCC is thus clearly subordinated to the neoliberal project of competency-based training and pedagogy (Pykocz, Benites, 2023; Ferreira, 2024), according to which it is enough for the individual to possess a set of techniques, skills and abilities that allow them to apply uncritically, without theoretical filters and reflexivity, the technological and didactic resources produced by large companies that find in the school field a unique opportunity to expand.

Critically analysing the BNCC and its formulation process is relevant to the debate on teacher training, especially since Articles 17 and 14 of Resolutions 2/2017 and 4/2018, respectively, establish that the curricula of teacher training courses must take the BNCC as a mandatory reference. It was mainly based on this requirement that a new resolution for teacher training was instituted, without a broad and democratic participatory process.

Therefore, the expression "in the dead of night" explains the publication of Resolution 2 of 2019 (Brasil, 2019), because there was no broad discussion in society and with the country's educators. The network of influences and sectors involved that formed the Bicameral Commission and the commitments of the National Education Council (CNE) in conducting crucial policies for public education, which discussed/decided the guidelines of this Resolution, reveal a strong presence of the private sector represented by Brazilian educational

conglomerates. As Evangelista, Feira and Titton (2019, s/p.) point out when analysing the members of the Bicameral Commission,

⁶ Counsellors are the exposed, though not immediately perceptible, face of the spurious interests that run under the *slogan* of defending good quality schools, and there is plenty of evidence of their direct and indirect institutional relationships. These include Private Apparatuses of Hegemony (APH); private higher education institutions; State Apparatuses; publicly traded educational companies; Sistema S [Senac, Sesi and Senai]; business movements; Social Organisations (OS) and activities linked to the defence of human and racial rights. Only two people with links to public higher education institutions appear on the Bicameral Commission (Evangelista, Feira and Titton, 2019, s/p).

The authors highlight the links between CNE counsellors and business movements, such as Todos Pela Educação (TPE) and Movimento pela Base (MpB), which exerted central political weight not only in the Bicameral Commission, but also in the National Education Council itself. Analysing this relationship elucidates the strong inclination of CNE/CP Resolution 2/2019 to subordinate teacher training to the logic of implementing the BNCC.

Educational associations and representatives of public universities have led various resistance movements, sharply criticising Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2019, calling for it to be repealed and for CNE/CP Resolution No. 2/2015 to be reinstated. This movement resulted in the repeal of the 2019 Resolution, although the 2015 guideline was not reinstated. In its place, a new regulation was approved: CNE/CP Resolution No. 4, of 29 May 2024, which "provides for the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Initial Training at Higher Level of Basic School Education Teaching Professionals (degree courses, pedagogical training courses for non-graduate graduates and second-degree courses)" (Brazil, 2024).

We know that the promulgation of the document, proposed by the National Education Council (CNE/CP), also did not please the critical teacher training community, as it was not given the necessary time for discussion and welcomed the contributions of associations and universities. As proof of this, in April 2024, ANFOPE published a position contrary to CNE/CP Opinion No. 4/2024 (Brasil, 2024), insisting that the document does not value

⁶ Chaired by Maria Helena Guimarães Castro, from the Basic Education Chamber (CEB), the rapporteur was Mozart Neves Ramos, from the CEB, nominated for Minister of Education in the Bolsonaro government by the Ayrton Senna Institute. The other councillors are: for the CEB, Alessio Costa Lima, Aurina Oliveira Santana, Ivan Cláudio Pereira Siqueira, Nilma Santos Fontanive and Suely Melo de Castro Menezes; for the Chamber of Higher Education (CES), Antonio Carbonari Netto, Luiz Roberto Liza Curi and Marília Ancona Lopez. (Evangelista, Feira and Titton, 2019, s/p.)

education professionals, does not cover initial and continuing training in an integrated manner, and omits issues such as career plans, a national salary floor, and adequate conditions for teachers' work (Anfope, 2024).

Analysing this document, we found that ideas or words that were highly criticised were removed from the text, such as the linking of training to the BNCC and its instrumental rationality. However, we noticed that various expressions were added to give it progressive content, such as solid theoretical and practical training, the importance of considering the historical evolution of educational theories, interdisciplinarity, and serving to "embellish" the document and please dissenting voices. However, although CNE/CP Resolution 4/2024 removed the direct mention of the BNCC, it remains linked to it between the lines, since the articles cited in the text of the resolution refer to the obligation to comply with the BNCC. Precisely for this reason, the entities representing teacher training, during the process of requesting the revocation of Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2019, also indicated the need to revoke Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2017, Resolution CNE/CP No. 4/2018 and Law No. 13,415/2017 - which institutes the High School Reform - because these legal provisions impose the organisation of teacher training in line with the BNCC.

As for the organisation of Resolution CNE/CP No. 4/2024, as shown in Table 1, the workload of 3,200 hours remained unchanged, as did the structure by training core. However, the document does not clarify which extension concept underpins the 320 hours allocated to this activity. Furthermore, although the resolution emphatically mentions practice as an essential training component, it does not define it consistently or articulate it with the notion of praxis defended in the 2015 Resolution. In addition to the absence of fundamental elements, such as valuing teachers and the centrality of pedagogical praxis, Resolution 2024 opens the door to the strengthening of a technicist education, assuming an instrumental character guided by market demands, since in its core is the essence of an education that submits to the precepts of the BNCC, therefore directly associated with an education by competences and skills, vigorously defended by the private sector.

Peroni and Scheibe (2017, 389) point out that "privatisation can no longer be seen as a simple threat or an abstraction, " confirmed by the explicit presence of movements that have led teacher training to increasingly market-based processes. These processes promote the emptying of solid, critical, and socially committed training, weakening the construction of relationships based on democracy, social, cultural, and economic justice.

1.2 An overview of teacher training in Portugal and Europe

In Portugal, the changes that have taken place over the last two decades are part of the so-called Bologna Process, and, regarding the influences of neoliberalism, the panorama is not very different. The Bologna Process takes its name from the Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999 in the Italian city of Bologna by the ministers responsible for higher education in 29 European countries. Subsequently, the process was opened to others, totalling 48 countries today. It is a process of intergovernmental reform aimed at realising the European Higher Education Area through the mutual recognition of degrees and other qualifications. To this end, a uniform credit system, called the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), was introduced to favour academic exchange, among other objectives. This process was a benchmark for the reforms that began in the early years of the 21st century, particularly in Portugal, with the restructuring of initial teacher training programmes, through the publication of Decree-Law no. 74/2006, of 24 March (Legal framework for higher education degrees and diplomas) and Decree-Law no. 43/2007, of 22 February (Legal framework for professional qualifications for teaching in pre-school education and basic and secondary education) (Portugal, 2006, 2007).

Initial teacher training is now carried out in two stages: the bachelor's degree, which lasts 6 semesters, and the master's degree, which lasts between 3 and 4 semesters, depending on the level of education for which the qualification is intended. With each semester corresponding to 30 ECTS credits, the bachelor's degree has 180 credits and the master's degree between 90 and 120 credits, depending on the level of teaching (the minimum in the case of pre-school education). Therefore, the degree changed to a master's degree, but the duration of the training remained unchanged, given that pre-Bologna training was already at bachelor's level and lasted 4 or 5 years. However, the aforementioned Decree-Law 43/2007 states that this change "demonstrates the effort to raise the level of qualification of the teaching staff to reinforce the quality of their preparation and enhance their socio-professional status". (Portugal, 2007). In addition to the fact that this change did not correspond to an increase in the duration of training, the post-Bologna legal framework practically eliminated the theoretical-critical components from the curriculum structure, "especially those that are considered particularly harmful (such as the sociology of education and educational policy), or dispensable (such as, for example, the history and philosophy of education), all of which occupy less time and space in initial training (or have simply disappeared)". (Lima, 2016, p. 152).

From 2007 onwards, the curriculum structure included the following components: a) General educational training; b) Specific didactics; c) Initiation into professional practice; d) Cultural, social and ethical training; e) Training in educational research methodologies; and f) Training in the area of teaching (Portugal, 2007). In the following decades, the 2007 legal framework was amended by Decree-Law 79/2014, 14 May, and the recently published Decree-Law 9-A/2025, 14 February, and the "Training in educational research methodologies" component was eliminated. Concerning "General Educational Training," which, in principle, contributes the most to the construction of critical thinking, it was practically eliminated, since out of a total of between 90 and 120 credits, it was only covered by between 5 and 10 credits.

Also revealing are some of the specifications made by these regulations regarding the "Cultural, social and ethical training" and "Training in educational research methodologies" components. About the former, the regulations state that it contributes to: "a) Awareness of the major problems of the contemporary world; b) Extension to areas of knowledge and culture other than those of their teaching qualification; and c) Preparation for non-disciplinary curricular areas and reflection on the ethical and civic dimensions of teaching activity"; however, it then states that the corresponding credits are included (which effectively means diluted) in the other components. The same thing happens with the "Training in educational research methodologies" component, as the document mentions its importance, explaining that it is responsible for ensuring "knowledge of the respective principles and methods that enable future teachers to adopt an investigative attitude in professional performance in a specific context, based on understanding and critically analysing relevant educational research", but does not assign its credits.

The legal text proclaims the importance of these two components. However, the fact that it has not awarded them specific credits expresses an effective devaluation of them, accentuating the "ideological criticism of educational thought and the attempt to discredit pedagogical theories and research in education". (Lima, 2016, p. 152). This author argues that the strong state regulation resulting from the Bologna Process has meant that the changes have contributed to the "depoliticisation of education and training". (Lima, 2016). Although the realities in Brazil, Portugal, and Europe are different, we cannot ignore the fact that they are part of a converging agenda of global public policies, which, as mentioned above, Roger Dale calls the "Globally Structured Agenda for Education". (Dale, 2004). In the following section, we analyse a phenomenon that is also part of this agenda: the expansion and consolidation of the short training programme of the global Teach For All network, on the pretext of teacher shortages.

2. Teach For All and the pretext of teacher shortages

Who We Are

Within our network there is a growing movement of locally rooted, globally informed leaders, including over 14,600 teachers currently in classrooms and 106,000 alumni leaders, reaching over a million children around the world. The Global Leadership Accelerator supports these leaders to further develop the leadership skills and mindsets necessary to transform systems around them, so that all children have the opportunity to fulfill their potential.⁷

Visitors to the Teach For All website are now greeted with the following message: Global Leadership Accelerator. The current context of teacher shortages is seen as a pretext for expanding and consolidating the global TFAI accelerated training programme, as happened in the 1980s and 90s with the Teach For America programme. Other countries have been encouraged to join through appeals such as "Teach in Your Country", with a message welcoming new members being posted on the parent organisation's website. For example: "Welcome Teach For Italy to the Teach For All Network" (<https://teachforall.org/>). Using the slogan formula to amplify the intended effect, messages like: "We imagine a world where every child has the education, support, and opportunity to shape a better future" follow on the organisation's website. The language used by affiliated organisations is similar. For example, they describe their "vision" and "mission":

Vision: One day, all children will have a quality education". (<https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>). One day, all children and young people in Portugal will have access to an education that allows them to develop their full potential, regardless of their socio-economic background.⁸

Mission: To empower a network of leaders who, through their transformative work as school teachers in vulnerable contexts, develop the skills and commitment needed to multiply their impact and continue expanding opportunities for all children. (<https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>) To create a movement of exceptional leaders committed to reducing educational inequality and capable of transforming reality inside and outside the classroom.⁹

Like the notions of "quality" and "leadership", "change" also has a strong presence in TFAI's discourse, even shaping what it calls its "Theory of Change", which has "Leadership Development Theory" at its core: "The Programme has a detailed Training plan, based on

⁷ Source: Teach For All website: <https://teachforall.org/our-learning-insights/global-leadership-accelerator>

⁸ <https://teachforportugal.org/>

⁹ <https://teachforportugal.org/>

Leadership Development Theory inspired by the principles: Lead yourself; Lead with others; Lead change." (<https://teachforportugal.org/>). It is clear that this language is similar to that of corporate promotional marketing:

The Leadership Development Programme is formative, professional, and paid, and lasts two years. Through this programme, the Mentor works full-time in a school in a disadvantaged socio-economic context. The programme is based on a model tested and replicated in 61 countries in the Teach For All network¹⁰.

The publicity for this programme highlights the "recruitment and selection" process, for example, on the Ensina Brasil website, through the message: "Reinvent your Journey: success and purpose go hand in hand.":

If you are a graduate looking for experience in leadership and transformation, apply; you do not have to have a career without purpose; this is your chance to enhance your career while transforming the country's education!¹¹

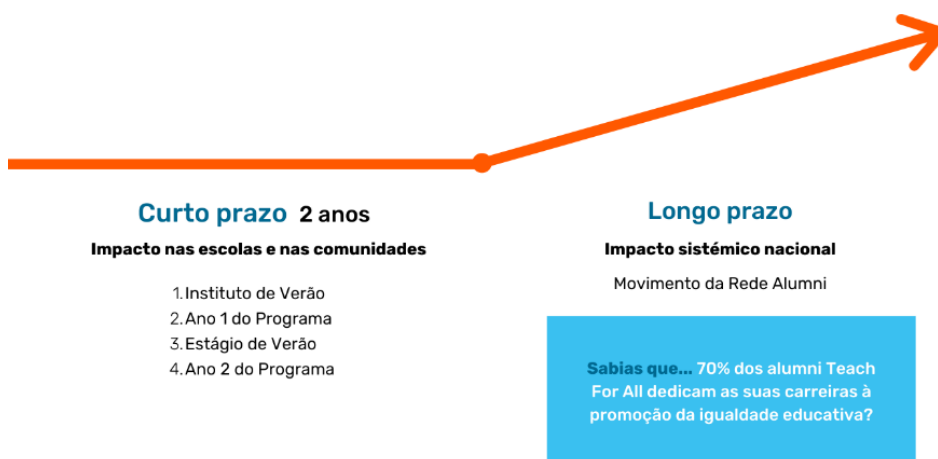
About "reasons to sign up", there are announcements such as: "Leverage your impactful career; Be part of the solution; Discover a new version of yourself with a unique experience; And do not worry, if you do not have a degree, you'll have the chance to complete a teaching course during the Programme!". (<https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>).

All the network members make it clear that they are non-profit organisations: "We are a non-profit organisation that aims to mobilise more talent and develop leadership to transform education, starting in the classroom". (<https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>). However, the language is no different from that used by profit-driven companies. For example, Teach For Portugal's website contains an image with a rising arrow, suggesting "income" in the short and long term, similar to the graphs organisations in the financial sector use to publicise their profits.

¹⁰ <https://teachforportugal.org/>

¹¹ <https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>

Figure 1 - "Short-term" and "long-term" impact



Source: Teach For Portugal website, <https://teachforportugal.org/>.

The constant reference to "impact" is a persuasive strategy, especially when it comes to numbers and percentages:

Renewal of relevant partnerships and record fundraising: +R\$ 20 million raised in 2023; +120 thousand public school students in a context of vulnerability reached.¹²

In 2023/2024, the Teach For Portugal collaboration accelerated the rise in average grades by 26 per cent from the beginning to the end of the school year, compared to classes without this collaboration.¹³

The discursive affinities with the business and financial world could not be more evident when we read, for example, messages about "Who we are" (Teach For Portugal) and "What we do" (Ensina Brasil):

We recruit, select, and develop young, talented graduates from the best universities in the country to become public school teachers in vulnerable contexts for at least 2 years and develop as future leaders, multiplying their impact for the transformation of education and the country. (<https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>, underlining in the original.)

In most organisations, human resources work directly on the problem to be solved. This means that, in general, there is little appetite for professional human resources exclusively dedicated to sustainability, fundraising, or marketing and communication. In short, we are asking for social organisations with 0% overhead and 100% resources dedicated to the people who need an urgent response.¹⁴

¹² <https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>

¹³ <https://teachforportugal.org/>

¹⁴ <https://teachforportugal.org/>

This second extract is from an article by the Director General of Teach For Portugal, entitled: "From NGOs to NGEs: The new Non-Governmental Organisations". The name "Non-Governmental Companies" over "Non-Governmental Organisations" is illustrative.

In addition to these strategies of persuasion, there is the use of "evidence" and "proof" of "research": "Our vision of research and learning is based on evidence; "A growing body of evidence supports our theory of change". (<https://teachforall.org/>):

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that Teach For All network partners attract new leaders who continue to work as educational change agents throughout their careers, and that the beliefs, mindsets, and other leadership attributes of network partner participants are shaped by their experience.¹⁵

Generally speaking, these strategies aim to influence public opinion and win over supporters, but they also provoke strangeness. How can such abbreviated training, termed "accelerated" and "intensive" in TFAll's terms, have such a huge impact? The so-called "proofs" and "evidence", presented as being the result of "independent research", fall flat when we realise that the primary entity carrying out the impact assessment is TFAll itself, along with other partner entities, especially from the economic and financial world. For example, in the case of Teach For Portugal, two "impact measurement partners" are mentioned: Teach For All itself and mater consulting.

In addition to the funders, the network has "ambassadors" and various partners who act as communication channels and sources of legitimisation, one of which is UNESCO itself. Even though it is in the field of Education, Science and Culture and not in the economic field, like the OECD, for example, it places TFAll among the "best practices", stating that the network's training programme consists of a "systemic approach to transforming education through the development of educational leadership, [...] "which can be adapted by others seeking to promote greater local ownership for sustainable development in education and other sectors". (UNESCO).¹⁶

However, anyone who knows the complexity and demands of initial teacher training at higher education level, in its theoretical and practical, social, cultural and ethical dimensions, which require a link between teaching, research and extension, can see the strategic role of publicising a training programme that is assumed to be abbreviated, being called "Intensivão" by Ensina Brasil, as one of the "best practices".

¹⁵ <https://teachforall.org/>

¹⁶ Source: UNESCO, s/p.

With slight variations from country to country, the "phases" of the programme are described as follows: "1. Teach For Portugal Academy; 2. Year 1 of the Programme; 3. Summer Plan; 4. Year 1 and Year 2 of the Programme; and Entry into the Alumni Movement!". The first phase, also called "Dive In!", consists of "compulsory and free preliminary training in leadership and pedagogy", which lasts "8 weeks - 4 online for 10h/week and four face-to-face full-time". This phase is described as follows: "In the last 3 weeks of the Teach For Portugal Academy you will have the opportunity to apply what you have been learning in practice, during which we receive children to refresh their learning"; years 1 and 2 of the programme correspond to direct contact with schools, from an empiricist and applicationist perspective; and the third phase, the "Summer Plan" or "Summer Academy", lasts around 2 weeks (<https://teachforportugal.org/>). The accelerated and intensive nature of this programme and the empiricist and applicationist perspective that shape it are apparent, even though it is disseminated, recommended, and/or replicated by international organisations, foundations, companies, governments, among other partners in the public and private sectors. This concerted strategy is not just about disseminating information; it represents a kind of certification of the programme in symbolic, political, and media terms.

On the pretext of a shortage of teachers, TFP's discourse has become more explicit, even about the names of the participants in the programme. Until recently, they were called "network participants", "mentors," or "teachers", as is the case with "Teach Brazil". The term "teacher", previously perceived as a retraction, has recently started to be used without hesitation. The Teach For Portugal website reads: "In 2025, we will be extending the Leadership Development Programme to professionals with teacher qualifications who want to deepen their skills and dedicate themselves to education in these contexts". (<https://teachforportugal.org/>). Searching further on the Teach For Portugal website, we found a link to the "Application Manual", entitled "Leading Change: professional and paid leadership development programme", and another to the recruitment advert: "Apply!". Clicking on it we see that there are now two types of application: one "for mentor" and one "for teacher": "the TFP teacher will have a contract with the Ministry of Education and a salary paid directly by the Ministry of Education, according to the conditions in force." (<https://teachforportugal.org/>). Demand has been high and seems to be increasing, as the information and enrolment forms for 2024-2025 show. In the case of Teach For Portugal, the deadline is 3 May 2025; in the case of "Ensina Brasil" the information is similar to that of the Portuguese counterpart, however, at the time of writing this article we were faced with the following

message on the website: "ENROLMENT CLOSED! Fill in the form if you want to be notified when we open a new selection process". (<https://www.ensinabrasil.org.br/>).

The neoliberal construction of the teacher is thus taking place, insofar as the new modes of government operate at the level of individual subjectivity. "Neoliberal governmentality" (Ball; Olmedo, 2012) is shaped in various ways, including training programmes such as Teach For All. These "new apparatuses" produce an "actively responsible individual" and "integrate subjects into a moral nexus of identifications and loyalties in the very processes in which they appear to realise their most personal choices". (Miller; Rose 2008, p. 214). Teachers may not be governed by an autocratic headteacher, "but they will be governed by themselves, becoming truly reflective professionals under the subtle persuasion of governmentality, dominated but free". (Perryman, Ball, Braun, & Maguire, 2017, p. 755).

Conclusion

In Brazil, Portugal and Europe, and increasingly on a global scale, neoliberal policies are spreading without much opposition, as a result of strategies such as Teach For All, used to create an illusion of general consensus around the advantages of quasi-markets and free-choice policies in education (Verger; Fontdevila; Rogan; Gurney (2017, p. 5). The process of expanding and consolidating TFAll is part of this globally concerted neoliberal agenda to destroy public education, including the discrediting and dismantling of higher-level teacher training systems. TFAll has strategically exploited the increasing blurring of the boundaries between public and private. The extensive lists of partners of both Ensina Brasil and Teach For Portugal show a predominance of organisations from the banking, insurance, investment, consultancy, etc., sectors; foundations, including those linked to banking institutions; city councils; the Ministry of Education, public and private universities, among many others. Two aspects stand out that shape this global network as part of neoliberal philanthropism: the use of marketing strategies and the linking of the network's programmes with philanthropists for whom public education is in a state of crisis, and the solution is based on market competition, commodification, and private investment. Since this formula is in the interests of philanthropic organisations, they actively and aggressively support the neoliberal education project in political and financial terms.

As we have tried to show in this article, higher education has been characterised by the requirement for courses lasting between 4 and 5 years; by the recognition of the

specificity and complexity of professional knowledge, demanding solid scientific and pedagogical training in the theoretical and practical, social, cultural and ethical dimensions; and the possession of an academic qualification - a bachelor's degree and/or master's degree - which confers a specific qualification for teaching, from pre-school education to secondary education, while the TFAI programme is assumed to be abbreviated, valuing, above all, personal, social and emotional competences and skills, such as motivation, talent, vocation and leadership, attributes which today are very much impregnated in individual subjectivity.

Neoliberalism is taking hold in our societies and, in particular, in education and training, in a concerted way, covering both the North and the South, even though it is often considered a phenomenon specific to the Northern hemisphere (Davies; Bansel, 2007). As these authors suggest, in order to understand its breadth and complexity, it is necessary to analyse how the new modes of neoliberal governance work at the level of individual subjectivity, aiming to produce the new subject (teacher, student, and others) suited to (and appropriated by) the neoliberal economy. To a large extent, the fact that the TFAI training programme has such a short duration and yet such a significant and rapid expansion is due to the belief that teaching is an intuitive craft that can best be learned on the job (Zeichner, Hutchinson, 2008), and that the ability to teach is a natural talent (Connell, 2010). As we have seen, TFAI explores these conceptions of teaching linked to vocation and altruism, considering that the personal attributes of so-called leaders are enough to teach. However, as we have argued, this type of accelerated programme is expanding and consolidating today under the pretext of teacher shortages, strategically ignoring the complex nature of the teaching profession in order to achieve its privatistic aims.

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